to come up with the money? Do we increase the income tax? Do we increase the payroll tax?

Already 75 percent of American workers in this country pay more in the payroll tax than they do in the income tax. So I say, no, we cannot increase the payroll tax. Will Members of Congress be brave enough to say, look, we are going to have to cut back on some of this other spending? I certainly hope they will. Our increase in spending at two and three and four times the rate of inflation has maybe been politically wise in a reelection sense, because as you come up with new programs and make more promises to people and say we are going to take care of more of the problems with the Federal Government, that means the Federal Government gets bigger. But since it is unpopular to increase taxes, what we have done is increase borrowing. And again, increased borrowing is nothing more than a promise that taxes are going to have to go up sometime in the future.

Mr. Speaker, let me make one last comment as I conclude tonight's colloquy on some of the problems that we are facing, and that is that we are dealing with Social Security and spending and it has been politically wise for politicians to put off coming up with a solution on spending. So the tendency of Congress is we wait until it is almost a crisis before we deal with that crisis.

In terms of coming up with new programs, Members of Congress have found that it is easier to get elected because they go on television cutting the ribbon and on the front pages of their newspapers when they come up with new programs to help people in solving some problem. Look, there are lots of problems across the United States. We have a system of government in the United States that has served us very well, but government cannot solve all those problems, and government should not solve problems that States and individuals can solve for themselves.

We have a system not because we are stronger than people in other countries, not because we are smarter, but because our system encourages hard work; it encourages productivity. So we have said in our constitution those individuals that study and use that knowledge, those that work and save and invest end up better off than those that do not.

□ 2200

That is a system that other countries around the world are now trying to copy. Let us get back to that system. Let us hold the line on spending, and let us stand up and deal with the Social Security problem.

AMERICA GOING TO WAR AGAINST IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BURNS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, tonight I want to take some time to address one of the most serious questions facing our Nation today, whether we go to war against Iraq in the next few weeks.

The tragic attacks upon our country on September 11, 2001, transformed our thinking about national security in this country. In the wake of September 11, the Bush administration rightly sought to define the fundamental mission of American power around the goal of fighting international terrorism. After September 11, the international community rallied behind America's war on terrorism with unprecedented unity and diplomatic, military, intelligence and other support. For the first time in its history, NATO invoked Article V of the Washington Treaty declaring the September 11 attack to be an attack on all 19 NATO member countries. Within 24 hours of its introduction by the United States, the U.N. Security Council passed a resolution unanimously calling on all member countries to support the war on terror.

The subsequent U.S.-led military action against the Taliban forces in Afghanistan and the reconstruction efforts that followed received broad support from the international community.

Now less than 18 months later, the situation has changed dramatically. Polls show that anti-American sentiment is rising around the world, and some 70 percent of the world's citizens believe that the United States presents the greatest threat to world peace today, ahead of Iraq and North Korea.

U.S. relations with many of our traditional allies in the North Atlantic Alliance are more strained than at any point in that organization's history. Moderates in the Muslim world feel isolated and have begun to question their relationship with the United States. Our credibility has been damaged, and our moral authority eroded. Many serious threats to our security are not receiving the attention they deserve.

How did we get to this state of affairs just 18 months after the world community united behind U.S. leadership in the war on terrorism? How did we so quickly squander the reservoir of goodwill that we had immediately after September 11?

The answer lies squarely with the Bush administration's defense and foreign policies and the arrogance with which they have conducted those policies. Following the successful military campaign against the Taliban in Afghanistan, the administration began to redirect its energies toward Iraq and the removal of Saddam Hussein from power. In his 2002 State of the Union Address, his speech delivered just 4 months after the terrible al Qaeda attacks on our country, the President identified Iraq, Iran and North Korea as the Axis of Evil; but very quickly thereafter it became clear that the administration would focus its attention narrowly on just one of these, Iraq. And even while bin Laden, the architect of the September 11 attacks, was still at large, Saddam Hussein took his place as the symbol of the new threat facing America.

Let me make something crystal clear here. Saddam Hussein is a brutal dictator and his quest for weapons of mass destruction does pose a threat. The question for our country is what is the nature and extent of that threat, and what is the best way for us to address it.

I believe that our objective in Iraq should be Iraqi compliance with the U.N. resolutions that require Iraq to disarm and eliminate its weapons of mass destruction and its missiles that exceed the 93-mile range. I also believe that we must accomplish that objective in a way that strengthens rather than diminishes our national security. It would be a tragic irony indeed if in the name of fighting terrorism we made Americans less rather than more secure, both today and in the future.

Tonight I want to address three areas: First, the Bush administration's approach to Iraq; second, the implications for America's national security of that approach; and third, where do we go from here. So first, the Bush administration's approach to Iraq.

Following the President's 2002 Axis of Evil speech, the administration's goal of regime change in Iraq began to take shape quickly. As columnist William Safire observed, regime change is a diplomatic euphemism for overthrow of government or the toppling of Hussein.

On February 5, 2002, testifying before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Secretary of State Colin Powell stated, ''We still believe strongly in regime change in Iraq, and we are looking at a variety of options that would bring that about.''

By March of that year the debate in Washington over the pros and cons of military action against Iraq was fully engaged in the newspapers, the talk shows and the backrooms. Kenneth Adelman, President Reagan's arms control czar and a close ally of the hawks in the administration, wrote in the Washington Post that military action to remove Saddam Hussein and bring democracy to Iraq would be ''a cake walk.'' Others, including former National Security Advisers to the President's father, Brent Scowcroft and James Baker, III, argued openly at that time against unilateral U.S. action to deal with Saddam.

Even the superhawks within the administration recognized that providing a legal rationale for regime change outside the context of the United Nations could prove tricky. While we may have the power, the power to go around knocking off nasty dictators, nothing under international law gives one country the right to invade another simply to change the regime. So what to do?

The Bush administration needed an argument, an argument that would provide the legal underpinning for unilateral American military action against Iraq or other nations that we determine to be a similar threat, and the answer devised by the administration was laid out in September 2002 in the national security strategy document, the so-called Doctrine of Preventive War. That theory is simple. It is also tempting. It goes like this: If we believe that a country will use weapons of mass destruction or arm terrorists with weapons of mass destruction against us, then we would ''not hesitate to act alone if necessary to exercise our right of self-defense by acting preemptively.''

In other words, the United States has the right to strike militarily, even if we have no evidence that such activities are occurring. We do not have to know that an attack is imminent, we can act on our belief that such action may occur at some point. It may sound good, but it does not take much to see that this doctrine is a recipe for international chaos.

Mr. Speaker, just imagine if India and Pakistan adopted this approach, South Asia would be decimated. The Preventive War Doctrine violates every principle of international law that the United States has fought to uphold.

The Bush administration was in fact asserting that the United States would be exempt from the very rules we expect all other nations in the international community to obey, because under international law we, and any other country, already have the right to take military action to defend ourselves against an imminent attack upon ourselves or our citizens. If we know another country is about to launch missiles against us, we do not have to wait for the missiles to land, we can act preemptively. If we know a foreign government is arming terrorists with weapons of any kind, including weapons of mass destruction, we do not have to wait in order to strike. We can take preemptive action under Article 51 of the U.N. Charter in the face of that kind of imminent threat.

But Iraq does not fit into that framework. The administration has never claimed that Iraq was behind the September 11 attacks. It is not an imminent threat. It is not poised to attack us. We have no evidence that it has transferred or is going to transfer weapons of mass destruction to any terrorist group. It has never possessed missiles capable of delivering weapons onto U.S. soils, and it is currently in the process under the U.N. regime of destroying its missiles with a range of over 93 miles. Not even this administration has claimed that an Iraqi attack is imminent.

Now as the administration rolled out its new theory of preventive war, and molded its approach to Iraq it did not want to go to the United Nations originally, and it also wanted to cut Congress out of the process in the early days. Administration lawyers claimed that the January 12, 1991 Congressional resolution authorizing the first President Bush to use force in the Persian Gulf War gave President Bush, the son, the right to send American troops into Iraq without further Congressional action.

The American people back then sensed that things were not going the right way. Polls showed that Americans might support military action against Iraq, but were not comfortable with America going it alone. And while the administration never conceded the legal point about having to go to Congress, it recognized the practical and political importance of requesting Congressional support, and it got it.

The Congressional resolution was, in my view, much too broad. It was a blank check. It gave the President the authority to take whatever military action he deemed appropriate without returning here to Congress for consent. Nevertheless, the Congressional debate and the resolution that was passed did reinforce the growing consensus that the President should work with our allies and the United Nations.

In November of last year, the administration itself, divided and under pressure from the American people, from Congress and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, took the very important decision to seek a new United Nations resolution on Iraq and put U.S. policy into the United Nations framework.

It was a great triumph for foreign policy of this country that on November 8, 2002, the United States got a unanimous Security Council vote for Resolution 1441, calling for resumption of inspections and enforcement of the U.N. resolutions on disarmament in Iraq. But what were the implications for us of going to the Security Council?

The decision to pursue action through the United Nations may have solved one problem, but it created another for the Bush administration. The administration's goal of regime change; in other words, getting rid of Saddam Hussein, did not fit with the more limited objective of enforcing Iraqi compliance with U.N. resolutions requiring Iraqi disarmament.

Administration hardliners who opposed going to the U.N. in the first place understood that these different goals could lead to very different approaches. They did not want to get mired in the U.N. process, and understood that their goal of forcibly removing Saddam Hussein from power was not necessarily consistent with the goal of enforcing U.N. resolutions. It was going to be like trying to fit the square peg into the round hole. And indeed, taking the case to the United Nations Security Council led to the clash of goals that is playing out today in the United Nations as we speak.

The U.N. strategy, going to the U.N., required the administration to shift its rhetoric and public justification of U.S. policy toward Iraq from regime change to the more limited objective, enforcing Iraqi compliance with U.N. resolutions. But short of a coup, or Saddam Hussein leaving Iraq, regime change obviously requires military action, but enforcing the U.N. resolutions does not necessarily require toppling Saddam Hussein. And while military action may ultimately be required to enforce U.N. resolutions, the two goals, regime change and compliance with U.N. resolutions, dictate very different approaches and very different timetables.

□ 2215

In the U.N. context, the context we took ourselves in November of last year, regime change is the last-ditch option. It only becomes a choice after it is determined that disarmament has failed. How and when you reach that point and what efforts must be taken before you get to that point is not clearly spelled out in the resolution. In this process that we set up, the findings and judgment of the international inspectors headed by Hans Blix and the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mohammed ElBaradei, hold enormous weight. And Iraq through its actions or inactions can influence the process and its outcome. The cost of going to the Security Council was clearly going to be over control of the timetable as we move forward.

But while the administration took the decision to go to the United Nations, it did not slow or adjust its military timetable. The deployment of U.S. forces went forward at an accelerated pace. The deadline for full deployment was mid-February or early March. We now have over 250,000 troops in the Gulf; and according to news reports, they are ready to attack whenever a decision is made. But the only deadline spelled out in Security Council Resolution 1441, passed unanimously by the Council on November 8, was that inspectors were to report to the Council on progress of disarmament, quote, ''60 days after inspections resume,'' which turned out to be January 27, 2003. Resolution 1441 did not provide any guidance as to what would happen if Saddam Hussein was found to be at least in partial compliance with the inspections by this deadline, or if there was not a decision in the council to take military action by then. It did not foresee the situation we are in today, a U.N. process focused on the goal of disarmament with one timetable and the U.S. goal of regime change with its own military timetable.

Let me now talk about some of the other arguments that the administration has advanced as it faced increasing criticism for its approach, because there have been a number of additional arguments that have been made beyond the original argument that Iraq's quest for weapons of mass destruction and the possibility that it will give them to terrorists pose an unacceptable risk. The additional arguments rolled out by the administration include, number one, an alleged link between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda, a link they have

failed to prove; two, the brutal nature of Saddam's regime and the need to liberate the Iraqi people; and, three, most recently, in the President's February 26 speech before the American Enterprise Institute, the argument that the overthrow of Hussein would be a catalyst for the spread of democracy throughout the Middle East and help bring about a final settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Bush administration's new domino theory.

I want to discuss just two of these here: first, the argument that regime change is necessary because Saddam Hussein is evil; and, second, the claim that military action will prompt a democratic domino effect throughout the region.

First, the argument that military action is justified because Saddam Hussein is, quote, ''an evil ruler.'' The hypocrisy of using this argument to justify regime change is difficult to ignore. Let us not forget that during the Iran-Iraq war the United States sided with Saddam Hussein. One of the central architects of current Bush administration policy, now-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, played a key role in the Reagan administration's decision to embrace Saddam Hussein in the early 1980s.

Declassified U.S. Government documents show that when Rumsfeld visited Baghdad in December 1983 as a special Presidential envoy to pave the way for the normalization of U.S.-Iraq relations, Iraq was using chemical weapons on a daily basis in defiance of international conventions. Five years later, in 1988, at the end of the Iran-Iraq war, I traveled to the Iraq-Turkish border as a staffer on the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee with my colleague Peter Galbraith. At that time, thousands of Kurds were fleeing across the border to seek refuge in Turkey. We interviewed hundreds of those refugees and documented Iraq's use of chemical weapons against the Kurdish people. Our report formed the basis for legislation to impose economic sanctions against Iraq for its use of chemical weapons against the Kurds. The bill passed the United States Senate; but the Reagan administration, which included many of the key players in today's debate, many people who are now in the Bush administration, opposed and helped stop that sanctions legislation when it came here to the House of Representatives. I challenge anyone to explain to me how you can oppose economic sanctions in 1988 in response to Iraq's use of chemical weapons against civilians and then today turn around and say that those same actions justify U.S. military force in 2003.

Moreover, if Saddam Hussein's use of chemical weapons against his own people was the reason for military action, we should have finished the job during the Persian Gulf War in 1991. Iraq has not used chemical weapons since 1988, since the time my colleague Peter Galbraith and I went to the Iraq-Turkish border at the end of the Iran-Iraq war. But 3 years later in 1991, not only did we not remove Hussein in Baghdad but at the end of the war we looked the other way, the United States looked the other way for many days, while Saddam Hussein turned his guns on the Shias in the south and the Kurds in the north. This history, I think, exposes the hypocrisy of the position the government has taken today and the willingness of some people in the administration to say anything to further their ends. The liberation of the Iraqi people is certainly a desirable goal, but it is also an argument that could be applied to many other countries with brutal regimes around the world. It is not by itself sufficient justification for U.S. military action.

Now, more recently, the administration has advanced the argument that the removal of Saddam Hussein will not only liberate the Iraqi people but will result in the spread of democracy throughout the Middle East. Promoting democracy in the Middle East is a very attractive goal, but one this administration has neglected until now. We have made only feeble efforts to push even generally supportive governments in Saudi Arabia and Egypt to move toward more openness and more democracy. And after calling for greater democratization of the Palestinian Authority many months ago, the administration has done nothing to help bring that vision closer to reality. The belief that democracy is going to somehow blossom in the Middle East as a result of U.S. military occupation of Iraq is a dangerous hallucination. Since when do we think we can implant democratic institutions throughout a region with no experience in democracy through some kind of big bang theory? True democratic change must come from within the region. It cannot be imposed from without. We have not begun to succeed at building democracy in Afghanistan. On what basis do we think we can do much better in Iraq, let alone the entire Middle East? We need only look at the Balkans, for example, at how difficult the task will be.

Four years after military intervention, NATO has 35,000 troops stationed in Kosovo, a region of less than 2 million people, and their departure date is not yet on the horizon. Most experts believe that the withdrawal of those troops and others in Bosnia would result in a return to violence and hostilities. Iraq is a country of 23 million people. Like Yugoslavia, it is an artificial construct, in this case strung together by the British colonial powers and made up of three major groups, 60 percent Shia, 30 percent Sunni, 10 percent Kurds. The President has presented this utopian vision of democracy breaking out in the Middle East after we invade Iraq. It is just as easy to imagine a scenario where difficulties in Iraq and the American action there fuel resentment toward occupying American troops and inflame the region against us, strengthening the hands of radical Islamic fundamentalists and making it more difficult to promote democracy and other U.S. goals in the region.

I recently came across an analysis of the imposing postwar task that we would face in Iraq, and I would like to share it with you. This is a quotation:

''It is not clear what kind of government you would put in. Is it going to be a Shia regime, a Sunni regime, or a Kurdish regime? Or is it one that tilts toward the Ba'athists, or one that tilts toward the Islamic fundamentalists? How much credibility is that government going to have if it is set up by the U.S. military? How long does the U.S. military have to stay to protect the people that sign on for that government? And what happens to it when we leave?''

These are the comments of none other than then-Secretary of Defense DICK CHENEY, speaking in April 1991 in support of former President Bush's decision to turn back on the road to Baghdad after we took Saddam Hussein's forces out of Kuwait. In fact, I agree with the 1991 DICK CHENEY. It will be a difficult, a costly and risky task to undertake the reconstruction of a postwar Iraq. It will take a long time, much longer than the 2 years the administration has suggested. It will take a sizable U.S. troop presence. And the U.S. Army's top uniformed officer has estimated that it would take hundreds of thousands of troops to feed the hungry and to keep the peace. Military action will also require enormous resources. Unofficial Pentagon estimates put the cost of the war alone at between $65 and $90 billion. The costs of reconstruction will be billions more.

So what are the implications? What are the implications of this policy for our security? I want to offer three observations: first, that the administration's approach to Iraq and the arrogance with which it has pursued its goals has badly damaged our ability to get the cooperation we need from others to protect our security interests and wage our long-term fight against terrorism. First, the administration's policies have triggered a rapid rise in anti-American sentiment around the world. There are those whose response to this sentiment is, hey, who cares? Their attitude: we're the big guys on the block, so who cares what they think? That swagger may make us feel good, but it is foolish. I care what the rest of the world thinks. We all should. We should care for the simple reason that what others think has an impact on our security. If our actions loosen our ties to our friends and allies, it undermines our ability to work together to combat terrorism. If our actions generate hatred and fuel the ranks of al Qaeda, it will increase the risk of attack upon us. If our actions undermine public support for friendly foreign governments, we may lose much more in the long run than we gain today. We may choose not to change our policies based on what others think, but it is

foolish not to try to understand the views of others when our own security is at risk.

Having the support of our friends and allies in the international community is important to the achievement of most of our foreign policy objectives. With respect to Iraq, cooperation would both reduce the cost of war and increase the prospects of winning the peace. In the 1991 Persian Gulf War, former President Bush and then-Secretary of State James Baker received U.N. Security Council backing for the use of force to expel Saddam Hussein from Kuwait. They assembled an impressive coalition of forces and succeeded in sharing the burden of the war. The military forces of 18 other countries participated in the Persian Gulf War, and more than 85 percent of the costs of that war were borne by others. In the current conflict, we face the opposite problem. Instead of having others help bear the burden, we are having to pay others to participate. Hence, some have dubbed the coalition that the administration has assembled not the coalition of the willing, but the coalition of the bought.

Having international support in Iraq would also greatly increase the prospects of winning the peace. In addition to providing financial and peacekeeping support, truly multilateral action in Iraq would help defuse any anger that otherwise would be directed solely against the United States. It would also be very helpful to have U.N. participation in the immediate postwar governing structure in Iraq to show that this is not a war of the United States against the Islamic and Arab worlds, but the world against Saddam Hussein.

Secondly, the Bush approach to Iraq has badly soured our relations with our NATO allies. As I mentioned earlier, the first and only time in the history of NATO that we invoked article 5 of the Washington treaty declaring an attack on one member to be an attack on all was after September 11. This dramatic action was followed by unprecedented cooperation in various aspects of the war on terrorism and the U.S.-led action in Afghanistan. In January, 2002, President Bush met in the Rose Garden with German Chancellor Schroeder and warmly praised Germany's role in the fight against terrorism, in particular for hosting the Bonn conference for multilateral assistance for the reconstruction of Afghanistan and the German role in training the Afghan police force. This sentiment has now given way to Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld's Eurobashing, including his incendiary comments comparing Germany to Libya and Cuba. The division in NATO is greater today than at any other time in its history. Never before have several NATO allies actively worked to defeat a U.S. proposal in the Security Council.

What caused this dramatic turnabout? The administration expected our allies to fall in lockstep behind its assessment of the Iraqi threat, behind its assessment of the extent to which Iraq has complied with the U.N. resolution and, most importantly, the administration's goal of regime change and its timetable for military action.

□ 2230

This approach probably reminded many of the way the Soviet Union used to dictate to the Warsaw Pact, rather than the traditional dialogue among NATO allies.

For many, the administration's ''my way or the highway'' approach to Iraq rekindled their resentment of the unilateralist approach to foreign policy issues that this administration took during its first 9 months in office, before September 11.

During that period, the administration thumbed its notices at the Kyoto Treaty on global climate change, walked away from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and an agreement to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention, and demonstrated its contempt for the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the International Criminal Court.

While the administration could have offered amendments to address legitimate concerns with some of these agreements, it chose instead to abandon them altogether, totally dismissing the views of our allies and other nations.

Much of this unilateral action was forgotten immediately after September 11, but the administration's approach to Iraq has reopened old wounds. Unless this split in the alliance is healed, damage to our interests could be great. Our allies have been extremely helpful in tracking down al Qaeda cells around the world. They have allowed U.S. troops to traverse their air space or use their territory for numerous operations outside of Europe, including the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

NATO currently has 50,000 peacekeepers in the former Yugoslavia, and 14 NATO allies have forces on the ground in Afghanistan. It is very difficult to imagine a successful U.S.-led operation in Iraq without the support both during the war and during the reconstruction period without the support of many of our NATO allies.

Third, the administration's Iraq policy has undermined the United Nations. After the September 11 attacks, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted an American sponsored resolution to oblige all 189 member states to crack down on terrorism. Our ambassador to the United Nations, John Negroponte, called it ''an unprecedented resolution on terrorism in the work of the United Nations.''

Today, the administration argues that the United Nations will become irrelevant if it does not immediately adopt a second resolution supporting military force in Iraq. But it is disingenuous to claim that we are concerned with the credibility of the United Nations and, at the same time, state that we will refuse to be bound by the Security Council unless it goes our way. Essentially our position is, the UN is relevant and credible only as long as it votes with us.

This kind of behavior undermines the legitimacy of the Security Council and the UN process. How can we credibly seek UN assistance and cooperation in the post-war building of Iraq, as we are, if we are unwilling to show respect for the UN process?

We cannot afford to forget the wide array of important issues that the United Nations deals with each day, from AIDS in Africa, peacekeeping in the Balkans, Cyprus, the Middle East and elsewhere. It is very much in our interest to have a viable and strong United Nations, and our actions should not undermine this goal.

Second, the administration's approach is likely to increase the risk of terrorist attack against the United States and threatens to plant the seeds for more deep-seated resentment in the Muslim world.

Last October, the CIA testified openly that Iraq for now, ''appears to be drawing a line short of conducting terrorist attacks.'' In the United States. But, ''should Saddam conclude that a U.S.-led attack could no longer be deterred, he probably would be much less constrained in adopting terrorist actions.''

In testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee on February 6, 2003, CIA director George Tenet stated it this way: ''The situation in the Middle East continues to fuel terrorism and anti-U.S. sentiment worldwide.''

In the short-term, I think it is clear that the threat to Americans will grow. The real question is whether it will lead to a higher risk of terrorist attack in the long term.

Moderates in the region in the Middle East fear that a U.S. invasion will galvanize radical and ultra-conservative forces and lend them new credibility and legitimacy, swelling their ranks and increasing violent attacks. We should not forget that bin Laden has pointed to the U.S. presence in Saudi Arabia, our military presence there, the infidels in the Islamic sites of Mecca and Medina, as the catalyst for his deep-seated resentment of our Nation. One can only imagine that a U.S. military occupation of Baghdad, U.S. alone, could be a recruiting bonanza for al Qaeda and other terrorist groups.

Others argue that the war on Iraq will lead to regime change in the Middle East, but not the kind the administration envisions. Instead, the first regimes to go could be in Jordan and Pakistan, where pro-western governments have a fragile hold on angry populations. If Pakistan topples, many warn, al Qaeda could gain access to the nuclear weapons that Pakistan has.

The administration's single-minded focus on Iraq has also pushed out the consideration of other issues and badly

skewed our national security priorities. Osama bin Laden is still at large. Despite the recent arrests in Pakistan, other key al Qaeda operatives are at large. Dramatic attacks, like the one in Bali, Indonesia, earlier this year, demonstrate that the international terrorist network is alive and well.

By elevating the threat of Iraq to the most dangerous threat to American security today, the Bush administration has helped create the impression that Iraq possesses the ability somehow of ''blowing the United States off the face of the Earth.'' In fact, while Iraq certainly presents a threat to its neighbors, and, in a worst case scenario, could act to facilitate a terrible terrorist attack on this country, it does not possess nuclear weapons, which are the most dangerous weapons of mass destruction, and, unlike North Korea or Iran, is subject to an international inspections regime ongoing which can prevent it from making progress toward that goal.

In fact, it is instructive to remember that of the three countries identified as the ''axis of evil'' in the President's 2002 State of the Union address, Iraq is the country farthest away from acquiring such weapons.

So, far from a simple ''us versus them'' world that the Bush administration has painted, America faces a national security challenge of enormous complexity. We must simultaneously cope with several separate and potentially grave threats, from Iraq to North Korea and the continuing threat of international terrorist networks. Without progress on nuclear nonproliferation, this list could grow quickly.

At the same time, we remain committed to an ongoing military presence in the states of the former Yugoslovia and to the elusive process of a negotiated settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Lack of progress in both these areas could set back American security interests and lead to an escalation in violence and terrorism. In South Asia, two nuclear countries are poised army-to-army along a fragile border. And the list goes on. Eliminating Saddam Hussein will not address these very real problems.

So, finally, where do we go from here? We find ourselves at a crossroads. There is little daylight left. It is not a question of whether or not we can defeat Saddam Hussein militarily. We can. Rather, it is a question of the long-term risks to our security by proceeding in a manner that alienates our friends, creates opportunities for our foes, weakens the rule of law and undermines America's moral authority.

If the threat can be met in other ways, then why would we not pursue those options to their fullest? Some have argued that it is too late, that the cost of the huge U.S. deployments overseas demand that these troops not be brought home without seeing military action.

I disagree. The stakes are too high for that kind of thinking. The costs, both human and financial, of deploying U.S. troops in the region, are insignificant compared to the costs of full U.S. military intervention and reconstruction of post-war Iraq.

We should not use our troop deployments as an excuse to act under an artificial timetable. Those deployments have played a role in achieving the more muscular inspections that we have seen in recent months.

We can always choose to take military action, but we cannot put the genie back in the bottle once we go down that road. Last Friday, Mr. ElBaradei, the Director of the IAEA, reported that there was no evidence of resumed nuclear activities in Iraq. He showed that the United States had unwittingly supplied the UN with forged documents to try and support our claim that Iraq had revived its nuclear weapons program.

The chief UN weapons inspector, Dr. Blix, who Secretary of State Powell has praised in the past as man of integrity and professionalism, Blix reported that Iraq had made progress toward disarmament and stated that the inspection process could be completed in a matter of months.

The use of force is a powerful and very important tool of foreign policy, but one that should generally be used as a last resort, when all other options fail. The heightened pressure the Bush administration has brought to bear on Iraq has focused world attention on Baghdad and reaped modest, but important, results with respect to Iraqi disarmament. I think most of the world believes that enforced UN inspections still have the potential to bring us to our primary goal, the disarmament of Iraq.

I believe the United States should give this process more time, both to further the goal of disarmament and to build broader international support for military action, should that become necessary to enforce the resolutions.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I believe that the overall approach this administration has taken is taking us in a dangerous direction. I believe our moral standing, our greatest source of strength, has been diminished. We cannot build a more democratic and a more open world on the administration's policies of preventative war, disdain for international law and neglect of international cooperation.

We have our work cut out for us. We must fight for policies that help rebuild America's moral authority in world affairs. We must articulate a credible alternative foreign policy doctrine that is not based on American exclusionism, but on America's stake as a leading partner in a diverse international community.

We are a strong and rich country. We experienced a terrible tragedy on September 11, 2001, but we do not have to act out of fear. Our strongest weapon against hatred and extremism are our high ideals, our democratic example founded on the rule of law. We cannot, we must not, allow this administration in the name of those ideals to pursue policies that are not worthy of our Nation's great history.

I yield the remainder of my time to the gentleman from North Carolina.

DEALING WITH A DEADLY CHALLENGE ON IRAQ

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding, and congratulate him on a very fine and thoughtful statement.

Mr. Speaker, there is a good possibility that our country will be at war in Iraq before the month is out. The President held out little hope for any alternative approach to disarming Iraq at his press conference last Thursday. Yet a majority of the American people continue to urge for more time for inspections while we are facing something close to a diplomatic meltdown with major allies. A failure to secure allied support will have major consequences for every American. Our citizens alone will shoulder the financial burden of this war and its aftermath. Our troops will need to be kept indefinitely in post-war Iraq, our country alone as an occupying force will be the target of hatred, resentment and hostility from many in the Arab world, and America will risk losing our standing among the world's democracies as one who leads by moral suasion and example as well as by military might.

Pollsters here at home say they have rarely seen an issue where the public's reaction is more conditional or ambivalent. Tonight I want to suggest this is because the Bush administration has not answered basic questions about this war and has backed us into a situation where we seem to be choosing between equally unsatisfactory ways of dealing with what most agree is a deadly challenge.

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The distinguished historian William Leuchtenburg citing Thomas Jefferson's maxim that ''great innovation should not be forced on slender majorities,'' recently contrasted George W. Bush's unilateralism to the behavior of previous wartime Presidents and found him ''unique in his defiance of so much international and domestic opinion.''

Many of our constituents believe that the full range and intensity of public opinion has not been visible or audible in Congress. One reason is that, by our vote of October 10 which gave the President an open-ended authorization for the use of force, this institution forfeited its coordinate decision-making role. Mr. Speaker, an up or down vote on a resolution authorizing force is at best a blunt instrument for checking the executive's constitutional dominance of foreign and military policy; but by granting unchecked authority months in advance, we made that instrument blunter yet.

Still, I believe the questions and the challenges to the President's approach